

EXHIBIT D

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI
EASTERN DIVISION

JOHN BARNHARDT, ET AL

Plaintiffs

V.

CASE NO. 4:65-cv-1300-HTW-LGI

MERIDIAN MUNICIPAL SEPARATE
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Defendant

TRANSCRIPT OF STATUS CONFERENCE
VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

BEFORE HONORABLE HENRY T. WINGATE
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

May 18, 2023
Jackson, Mississippi

The proceedings were reported by a stenographic court reporter.
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APPEARANCES:

REPRESENTING THE PLAINTIFFS:

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REPRESENTING THE INTERVENOR:

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Aria Vaughan, Esquire
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ALSO PRESENT:

Dr. Amy Carter, Superintendent
Meridian Public School District

Ms. Jamie Dole, Paralegal

1 Ordinarily -- ordinarily -- when a bound individual to a
2 court's clear declarations, as they would be in a case like
3 this, to move forward to close a school, the entities involved
4 know that the desegregation plan calls for the court's
5 approval. The school system apparently ignored that particular
6 facet and seemingly was moving forward on the elementary
7 school, again, without notifying the court and getting the
8 court's approval.

9 And the key is court's approval, not what they thought was
10 going to happen, not what they thought was going to result in a
11 settlement. But there is a procedure for this, and the school
12 system didn't follow it on the first instance and seemingly,
13 had this call not been made, may not have followed it on the
14 second.

15 So I asked the question the other day as to whether
16 Mr. Cusick was arguing here that because of this failure would
17 that be enough in of itself to negate all the actions of the
18 school system with regard to the middle school and even with
19 regard to the elementary school? Would that factor alone be
20 enough to say that the school district is not in compliance
21 with its obligations to the court?

22 Now then, Dr. Carter, you had your hand up, so do you have
23 something you want to add?

24 DR. CARTER: Yes, sir. Thank you, Your Honor. At
25 the end of each one of our community meetings, our parent

1 meetings, I ended with next steps. And the final next step on
2 that list was to notify the courts and pending approval for the
3 elementary reconfiguration plan.

4 So I have that document. I can send it to the court if
5 need be, but I ended each one of those sessions letting the
6 community know the next step would be to notify the court
7 regarding what we were doing with the elementary
8 reconfiguration.

9 So please don't think this time around the district
10 disregarded the fact that it needed to come before the court
11 because that was the last item on the next steps list that I
12 shared in every community meeting. So I just wanted to clarify
13 that, Your Honor. I don't know if it helps or hurts, but I
14 wanted to clarify that.

15 THE COURT: Well, a surmise that a matter might be
16 subject to compromise and settlement still does not excuse the
17 school system from securing the approval. And because there
18 was no approval secured, then Mr. Cusick is still maintaining
19 his objection.

20 So now, if the court is going to rule with the school
21 system on its address of Carver Middle, the court still has to
22 make some mention of the school district's failure to obtain
23 approval, and then the court has to make some determination of
24 what weight to be given to that in the overall appraisal of
25 this entire situation. As I said before, this is why the court